

**Statement by the Delegation of Montenegro  
Special meeting of the Permanent Council  
January 19<sup>th</sup>, 2010**

We would like to welcome the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Spain and thank him for his briefing on the Presidency's views on the cooperation between the EU and the OSCE in the areas of mutual interest, as well as on the priorities of Spanish Presidency. This year will be marked by ongoing discussions in the OSCE within the Corfu Process on issues of stability and security in the OSCE area, and we appreciate Minister's views in that regard. As to the priorities of the Presidency we also welcome very much that the EU puts Western Balkans high on its agenda.

Montenegro is at crucial stage of its EU accession, marked by important milestones that have shown on one hand the continued strong political will by Montenegro to implement reforms needed to achieve its strategic goal of Euro Atlantic integration, and on the other hand, the growing capacities of its institutions to match that political determination.

Last year has been a good proof of that: upon submitting the application for EU membership in December 2008, we have completed the Questionnaire by the European Commission and submitted the replies to Brussels in December 2009. We are in process of responding to the additional questions and are awaiting hopefully positive *avis* by the Commission that would lead to the candidate country status in the course of this year.

Montenegro has also successfully fulfilled the criteria from the Road Map for visa liberalisation during last year. As a result, Visa free regime was granted to Montenegro and two other countries of the region, Macedonia and Serbia. The significance of this decision is enormous for our countries and especially our citizens, as it is a very tangible evidence of our European perspective. It testifies to the efforts our countries have made and gives additional motivation and impetus for further reforms. Nevertheless, our success is not complete without the success of other two countries that were not part of this decision, and we hope that Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina will soon be granted the same status.

Both processes, replying to the Questionnaire, as well as fulfilling the Road Map criteria have successfully tested and strengthened administrative capacities of Montenegrin institutions and prepared them for next challenges.

Government of Montenegro is currently preparing the National program of Integration 2010-2014, which will make a strategic framework for further reform activities. With successful track record in reforms, evidenced in the latest EC Progress Report, we are now focusing on further implementation of reforms,

including in the areas of rule of law, strengthening of the judiciary, fight against corruption and organized crime, as well as harmonization of legislation with the *aquis*. Although we are proud of the achievements so far, we are fully aware of the important challenges and work ahead. We are dedicated to continue in this direction.

We would also like to reiterate our appreciation for the valuable assistance of the OSCE Mission in Podgorica in implementation of our reform agenda, in helpful synergy with the EU on the ground.

Mr Chairman, Mr. Minister,

We continue to believe that the individual merits of all countries should be taken into account in regard to EU integration process, and that they should be judged by their own dynamics of reforms and progress made. At the same time, Montenegro views the progress of other countries of the Region in EU integration as a success for all, since it is indispensable for stability and security not only of Western Balkans, but of Europe as a whole. Strengthening regional cooperation and good neighbourly relations has been our key foreign policy priority, that we pursue both bilaterally and through regional initiatives. This year Montenegro will chair three Regional initiatives /Central European Initiative, Adriatic-Ionian Initiative and Process of Cooperation in SEE. By fostering closer economic, political and cultural ties within these initiatives, Montenegro will further promote regional cooperation. This is also a precondition for European integration that leads to the further prosperity of the Region, which is in the interest of both our countries and the EU.

At the end, we would like to reiterate our satisfaction with the overall excellent cooperation between Montenegro and the EU; and we wish to assure the Minister that Montenegro will continue to be a reliable partner to Spanish Presidency. We hope that the next period will be successful for both of our countries in our respective tasks.

Thank you.